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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003598

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [TU](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KSEC](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#)
SUBJECT: GOI AGREES UPON MODALITIES FOR IRAQ-TURKEY-USA
TRILATERAL ON SECURITY ISSUES

REF: A. ANKARA 1933
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3509

Classified By: POLMIL MINISTER COUNSELOR MICHAEL C. CORBIN
FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: GOI spokesman told Ambassador and MNF-I CG November 11 that GOI needs more time to make arrangements for the security trilateral with Turkey and the U.S. He explained the idea is the GOI's and that the goals are to both achieve tangible results (absent from Turkish visits to Baghdad and discussions with KRG) and to avoid a strong Turkey-KRG track on issues that are important for Iraq's central government. Ambassador and CG proposed technical committees as a way to ensure movement and emphasized that the GOI needs to work with the KRG to ensure the Iraqi side will speak with a unified voice and will not turn the forum into a squabble between GOI and KRG in front of the Turks. Al-Dabbagh agreed. Ambassador noted it might help the strategic, bilateral process if the PKK issue could be removed and dealt with in the trilateral format. On the substance, al-Dabbagh agreed that perhaps two standing technical committees could be formed: one would focus on trilateral intelligence exchanges and the other would focus on Turkish actions on the Turkish side of the border and Iraqi actions on the Iraqi side to control PKK movement and supply. CG Odierno stressed that this is a very emotional issue for the Turks and the GOI has to be sure that it is ready to be fully involved in the process. End summary.

[1](#)2. (S) GOI spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh (who is still coordinating the Iraq-Turkey-U.S. trilateral until Minister of State for National Security Affairs Shirwan al-Waeli -- just returned from Egypt -- can take over the operational details as GOI delegation head) met with Ambassador and MNF-I Commanding General Raymond Odierno November 11 to brief them on GOI thinking on the trilateral.

[1](#)3. (S) Al-Dabbagh said the trilateral is a GOI idea and that the Iraqi side needs to convince a reluctant GOT that there is merit to the proposal as this format had gone nowhere in the past. Al-Dabbagh said he argued to the GOT that nothing concrete came from envoy Murat Ozcelik's visits to Iraq and his meetings with all parties. Al-Dabbagh said once the Turks agreed to the concept, he argued for the trilateral, rather than bilateral format for the meeting. He then asked the GOT if it would halt all cross-border operations (CBOs) in the lead-up to the trilateral meeting. The Turks responded that that is impossible due to intense domestic pressure to respond to terrorism in the run up to the Turkish elections. Al-Dabbagh said he asked whether at least the GOT would consider giving the GOI more than one-hour notice on CBOs, noting that by the time the information got to PM al-Maliki the operations were always over. The Turks had responded with operational security concerns, al-Dabbagh said, but he noted this remains very important for PM al-Maliki. He asked if there is some way

the U.S. could help set up a secure channel that would allow direct GOT-GOI notification.

¶4. (S) Remaining on the subject of GOI concerns, al-Dabbagh said while PM al-Maliki had encouraged PM Erdogan to enter into direct contacts with KRG figures such as Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, the PM is concerned about too much direct KRG-GOT contact. He said the PM wants to avoid a parallel track between the KRG and the GOT: the GOI should deal with the Turkish Government. CG Odierno noted that the GOI needs to be aware that if it takes on the security issue of the PKK, the GOI opens itself up to strong criticism from the Turks if the PKK continues to act. Al-Dabbagh acknowledged the point but said the KRG needs to show commitment to tackling the PKK. The GOI is already under criticism on allegations that PM al-Maliki had agreed to Turkish CBOs and the GOI needs to fulfill its responsibility to help counter the PKK. He mentioned specifically PKK members' use of airports in the KRG and their access to logistics such as fuel supplies. While the GOI needs to be responsible, al-Dabbagh continued, the GOT needs to "be reasonable" in its demands of the KRG.

¶5. (S) Turning to the timing of the trilateral, which had originally been proposed for November 14-15 to get the process going as soon as possible, al-Dabbagh noted that the GOI has yet to invite the key KRG representative to participate in the GOI delegation to the talks. He said that former KRG Interior Minister Sinjari had been replaced by a new PUK figure (note: Othman Hajji Mahmoud--former PUK Minister of Interior in Suleymaniyyah. End note) and that MSNSA Waeli would now invite him to attend the talks.

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Al-Dabbagh asked if the U.S. could participate next week, if the talks could be organized then. Ambassador explained that given the short notice it is too late to get a representative from Washington but that he would participate in the talks for the U.S. side. He noted that there are two important considerations for the GOI to take into account: first, that an appropriate trilateral agenda be developed with tangible outcomes; and second, that the forum not turn into an occasion for differences between the KRG and the central government to be exposed. On the first point he said that certain items, such as the bilateral GOI-GOT security agreement might not be appropriate for this setting. That could be worked directly between the two sides. Issues that might be appropriate included intelligence sharing and notifications of cross border operations. On the second point he said it is vital that the GOI work with the KRG on the trilateral process and ensured that the KRG representative would act absolutely in concert with the rest of the delegation.

¶6. (S) Al-Dabbagh acknowledged both points stating that he agrees completely about the agenda. The bilateral security agreement would be more appropriate for the Strategic Cooperation Council meeting that Erdogan and al-Maliki had agreed to and that al-Maliki wants to be held before the end of the year. Al-Dabbagh would be coordinating that effort which also needs to address important Iraqi energy issues. The Ambassador noted it might help the strategic, bilateral process if the PKK issue could be removed and dealt with in the trilateral format. On the substance, al-Dabbagh agreed that perhaps two standing technical committees could be formed. One would focus on trilateral intelligence exchanges and the other would focus on Turkish actions on the Turkish side of the border and Iraqi actions on the Iraqi side to control PKK movement and supply. Al-Dabbagh noted this is a good means of combating GOT complaints, for example, that the KRG was allowing PKK members to be treated in KRG hospitals, "the Turks complain directly to the KRG about this," he said, and not to the GOI. "How can we determine if this is true or not, if we are not told?" In response to the Ambassador's question about where the technical committees should meet, Baghdad or Irbil, al-Dabbagh said emphatically that the

Committee's should meet in Baghdad but could make site visits to Irbil as needed.

¶17. (S) CG Odierno reiterated his point that this is a very emotional issue for the Turks and the GOI needs to be sure that it is ready to be fully involved in the process. The Turks would be measured until the PKK made another deadly attack on Turkish soil, he emphasized, then the GOT would have to act because of enormous domestic pressure. Al-Dabbagh said he understood, and had to convince the GOT that the time is not right to publicize the trilateral process until the first meeting is held. He had made a short statement in Istanbul in response to Turkish pressure, but it is important not to say anything more until the trilateral meets. He said he would brief MSNSA al-Waeli and understands Embassy and MNF-I would do the same. He confirmed an MOD rep would join the GOI delegation in response to the Ambassador's question and said he would look at timing on November 17 or later.

¶18. (S) Comment: Embassy and MNF-I will meet with MSNSA al-Waeli and closely watch to ensure GOI-KRG coordination in advance of the trilateral. We will also work to provide some substance to technical committee ideas discussed with al-Dabbagh. The delay in the meeting allows more time to work on both issues.
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